



## The Peer Assisted Student Support (PASS) Leadership module assisting first year students' transition to higher education at Technological University of the Shannon

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### ABSTRACT

Peer Assisted Student Support (PASS) has been running at the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) since 2009. It is an academic peer learning initiative in which second year students – PASS Leaders – undergo rigorous training to facilitate timetabled study sessions with first year students during semester one. The aim of PASS is to ease first year students' transition into higher education. PASS Leaders are encouraged to complete a 5-credit module as part of their journey. PASS Leaders are not paid, but they receive a digital badge for PASS Training. The PASS Leadership module, introduced in 2010, aims to develop students' leadership, communication, and professional development skills through the facilitation of PASS sessions. The module will be critically examined to ascertain its impact on PASS Leaders and first year students.

Both PASS and the Leadership module have evolved considerably since their introduction due to international events (such as the covid pandemic), reflections on pedagogy, advances in technology and feedback on the module. Adaptations include updating elements of the module, utilising technology, introducing debriefs and practice sessions, and further support for PASS Leaders. The impact of changes to the module on PASS Leaders and first year students will be explored. The paper will conclude with some suggestions about how PASS could be sustained into the future, such as embedding the role of the academic and employing graduate interns. Recommendations for further research at TUS and comparative studies will be proposed.

**Keywords:** SI-PASS, Supplemental Instruction, Peer Assisted Study Sessions, Peer Assisted Student Support, academic peer learning; peer learning; peer support, leadership.

### Introduction

#### Irish Context

In Ireland, publicly funded higher education is provided mainly by seven universities, five technological universities, two institutes of technology, and 11 other specialised third-level institutions (Higher Education Authority [HEA], 2025). Technological universities are among those that can award undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications (Quality and Qualifications Ireland [QQI], 2021). TUS is home to approximately 15,000 students and more than 1,450 staff (Technological University of the Shannon [TUS], 2023). The university is geographically dispersed across seven campuses throughout the Midwest and Midlands regions. This geographical spread presents some obstacles to the growth of PASS, one solution to this will be explored in the discussion.

### History of PASS

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PASS evolved from Supplemental Instruction (SI), a programme developed at the University of Missouri Kansas City in 1973 to address attrition rates (Martin, 2008). It took almost 20 years for the model to gain notice in Europe, as similar initiatives were introduced at Kingston University in the UK and Lund University in Sweden (Malm, et al., 2023). Since then, SI-PASS has seen steady growth, particularly in Northern Europe with over 75 higher education institutions now offering SI-PASS schemes in 12 countries (Malm, et al., 2023). SI-PASS can be distinguished from other peer initiatives by its “initial training and continuous support of the Leaders and a follow-up/evaluation of the programme outcomes” (Malm et al., 2023, p. 6). Individual institutes must decide how their schemes are structured and supported, the evolution of how PASS operates at TUS will be explored in the discussion. In order to be considered SI-PASS, sessions must be small, voluntary study groups attached to a discipline and facilitated by a student from at least one year above (Malm et al., 2023).

PASS was introduced on the Athlone campus in 2009 as part of a collaborative project (Ginty & Harding, 2014). The initial pilot in Athlone involved six PASS Leaders and was based on the Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL) programme developed by Bournemouth University in the United Kingdom. TUS has been in receipt of many funding initiatives which were instrumental in ensuring the continued operation of PASS. The initial financing came from a fund designed to create a collaborative culture focusing “on the quality of teaching and learning, improved graduate education, broader access to higher education, and better managed higher education institutions” (Ginty & Harding, 2014, p. 37). PASS is currently being funded through the Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Funding in Higher Education (SATLE). The focus of this fund is on “promoting innovation, collaboration, and the enhancement of teaching and learning practices across Irish higher education institutions” (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 2025).

### How PASS operates at TUS

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PASS is a scheme that fosters cross-year support between learners on the same programme. First year students and second-year PASS Leaders are at the core of PASS and are the key beneficiaries. PASS encourages first year students to support each other and to learn cooperatively under the guidance of trained PASS Leaders, from the year above. PASS Leaders plan group activities based on requests from first year students. During sessions, Leaders separate students into smaller groups to work on activities and then discuss their answers with the larger group. Leaders do not teach new information, instead, their role is to facilitate discussion and plan activities (Dawson et al., 2007). Thus, PASS sessions empower first year students to teach each other and work together to solve the issues they have identified in their course (Dawson et al., 2007). PASS is non-remedial (European Centre for SI-PASS, 2018) and therefore relevant to all first year students regardless of their ability. First year students and PASS Leaders are consulted throughout the year, and this peer-to-peer learning approach is constantly evolving based on first year students' needs.

The aim of PASS is to help ease the transition for first year students into higher education. Since 2009, 472 PASS Leaders have volunteered and facilitated PASS sessions. The results from evaluations carried out over the last two years indicated that on average 92% of first year students agreed that PASS helped with the transition to TUS and higher education. Stokoe et al. (2024, p. 379) explain that “students feel as if they are unable to ask questions or approach their professors for help, which can further impact their transition to

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university if they feel as if they have nowhere to turn for help” but providing them with study groups can help them feel supported in their coursework.

The structure and delivery of PASS vary from one institute to another. At TUS, PASS Leaders must complete two days of training to prepare them for the role. They complete an online module asynchronously during the summer months and attend a full day of in-person training in September. They are awarded a digital badge for PASS Training upon successful completion of all elements. The badge is awarded in recognition of students' hard work, time, engagement, and assimilation of knowledge required to become a PASS Leader (TUS, 2025a). It was introduced to incentivise Leaders to succeed at training thereby better preparing them to facilitate PASS sessions. 145 PASS Leaders have been awarded the TUS Digital Badge for PASS Training since it was introduced in 2021. The structure of the academic year allows Leaders to practice their first session plan during the week before the first year students arrive on campus. PASS Leaders are unpaid volunteers who work in pairs/triads. They operate and are attached to a particular programme (not subject areas) which is possible due to the smaller class sizes at TUS.

PASS sessions operate during semester one only, on average, Leaders complete five PASS sessions, for example, in 2024/25, 21 PASS Leaders facilitated 47 sessions. This is due to the weight of second year students' workload and how it increases as the academic year progresses. Attempts to lengthen the number of sessions past semester one have failed in the past. However, yearlong PASS was piloted during the 2025/26 academic year, the outcome of which could alter how PASS is made available to future first year students. As part of evaluation, Leaders were asked to list the skills they gained delivering sessions. For the last two academic years the most prevalent skills noted were communication, presentation skills, time management, and leadership/facilitation. Other traits identified were teamwork, confidence, empathy, technology, and research skills.

Although PASS has been running in Athlone since 2009, TUS wasn't established until 2021. The establishment of this new technological university resulted in seven geographically dispersed campuses. In 2023 PASS was piloted on the Clonmel campus on one programme with three Leaders. This pilot was deemed successful as it doubled the following year and those two PASS sessions have been maintained. Dawson et al. (2007) warns that when Leaders are not adequately supported, the quality of PASS sessions becomes endangered. One of the difficulties with growing PASS is how to ensure quality. For PASS to grow across multiple campuses, additional staff resourcing will be required to support the additional number of Leaders.

PASS is coordinated centrally through the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development (CPID) which supports innovation, diversity and excellence in learning, teaching and assessment (TUS, 2025b). This includes a full-time academic role within CPID to support the development and implementation of PASS. This lecturer is supported by several academic, professional and administrative staff called PASS Supervisors. PASS Supervisors assure the quality of PASS through a range of processes including but not limited to:

- Recruitment and training of PASS Leaders,
- Weekly structured debrief sessions with PASS Leaders,
- Observing PASS sessions,
- Marking assessments, cross moderation of results and meeting with External Examiners,
- Liaising with timetabling, finance, registration, and faculty staff,

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- Ongoing communications and marketing,
- Annual evaluation.

Another goal of PASS at TUS is to support the professional development of staff who engage with PASS, thereby supporting its sustainability. Staff are encouraged to undertake Supplemental Instruction-Peer Assisted Study Sessions (SI-PASS) Supervisor Training with the European Centre for SI-PASS, enabling them to work with the PASS initiative. Since 2009, 44 staff have completed this training to perform a variety of roles from overall coordination to observations. Currently, over 30 staff actively support PASS, these roles range from one to multiple hours annually. Supervisors involved in training and debriefs reinforce and cultivate academic integrity with PASS Leaders, who in turn model those good practices to first year students. In June 2025, TUS hosted SI-PASS Supervisor Training facilitated by Certified Trainers from Sweden and the UK. The three-day training, attended by staff from TUS, Ireland and Estonia, provoked in-depth pedagogical activity, and discussion.

### **The TUS PASS Leadership module**

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The aim of PASS Leadership module is to develop PASS Leaders' leadership, communication, and professional development skills. The module is unique in that students from any discipline can apply to complete it. However, it is not the only leadership module of its kind offered; for example, PASS Leaders at Ulster University (2025) can earn credit for undertaking a similar role.

The PASS Leadership module, created in 2010, was designed to give leaders an opportunity to gain *credits* or *accreditation* for their activities, and had the following learning outcomes:

1. Identify the principles and practices of peer assisted learning and the role of a PASS Leader.
2. Explain and apply the facilitation techniques required of a PASS Leader.
3. Establish and sustain supportive relationships between PASS Leader and peer tutee through facilitation of weekly PASS sessions.
4. Guide and support the tutees in a range of peer learning activities covered in PASS leadership training.
5. Engage with academic staff and school management as required by the PASS Leader role.
6. Evaluate and reflect on the impact of the PASS Leader role on their professional development.

Walsh (2021) explored some changes to the PASS Leadership module, including the introduction of technology and formative assessment. The subsequent discussion attempts to build on that work and critically evaluate the success of some of the changes introduced.

#### *Teaching and Learning Strategies*

An active learning approach is taken on the module which is taught through a blended series of face-to-face, technology-enhanced, and online interactive sessions. Learners are further supported through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Moodle. During PASS Training, Supervisors and Senior Leaders model best practice and learners actively engage in practice to prepare for their role as PASS Leaders. Chickering and Gamson (1987, p. 3) highlight the importance of students being participants and how they "must talk about what they are learning, write reflectively about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives." The module is mainly taught through team teaching wherein facilitators model different strategies that Leaders themselves can use in their sessions. Training includes icebreakers,

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worksheets, discussion, individual learning, interactive small group work, think-pair-share, jigsaw, problem-solving, brainstorming, Know, Want to Know, Learned (KWL), Venn diagram, role play, simulated sessions, Classroom Assessment Techniques (CAT), self-assessment, feedback, individual practice and reflective training exercises. Leaders are encouraged to access online resources provided internally and by the European Centre for SI-PASS (2026). Through participation in active learning and instructional technologies, first year students develop learner autonomy and independent learning skills.

*Module Assessment Strategies*

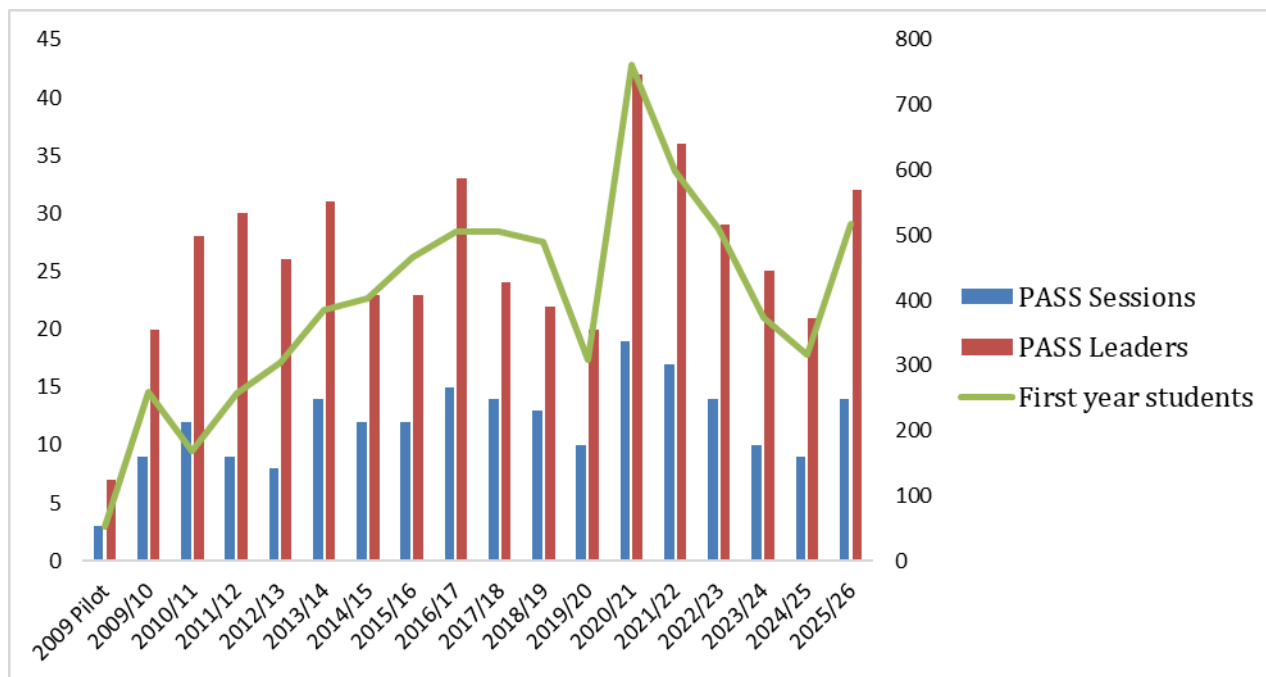
The module is assessed both formatively and summatively. Summative assessment often results in a mark or grade being awarded to a student after testing their knowledge retention (Dixson & Worrell, 2016). Leaders receive marks for their first session plan, observation, midterm review, and journal. Formative assessment aims to improve student learning through the provision of feedback (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2007). Leaders are encouraged to submit drafts of their session plans and journal for which criterion-referenced, formative feedback is shared with them during debriefs. Rubrics have been created for each assessment element and timely feedback is provided in advance of final submission dates. New ways of providing both generic and personalised formative feedback to PASS Leaders were developed (for example, written and audio feedback online). Some of these methods were found to be sustainable as the number of PASS Leaders grew, and others, such as the provision of personalised audio feedback were not. The module is assessed via continuous assessment which includes the following components:

- Group project: PASS Leaders work together in teams to create their first session plan.
- Practical evaluation: observation of at least one PASS session.
- Written report: individually, PASS Leaders compile a document containing the following:
  - Plan and review each session with first year students.
  - Reflect on the skills they are gaining during sessions.
  - Record and submit attendance to the VLE.
  - Share their observations and reflect on their progress midway through their sessions.
  - Engage with faculty in relation to sessions and first year questions.
  - Reflect on CATs and the effectiveness of the results they obtain from first year students.
  - 1,000-word reflective essay documenting and reflecting on their personal development from training to final sessions.

## Discussion

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (Department of Education and Skills (2011, p. 56) states that “a positive first year experience is crucial to achieving the goals of higher education”. Formalised peer learning is one of many learning and teaching activities that has the potential to enrich the quality of education (Boud, 2001). The progression of PASS is represented in Figure 1 below, which displays the number of PASS Leaders, PASS sessions and first year students (who PASS was potentially available to) since 2009.

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**Figure 1** Progression of PASS from 2009 to 2025/26

Since 2010, 304 PASS Leaders have completed the module, indicating a 69% completion rate. The number of students who completed the module reached a high of 91% for the years 2014-2016 and again during the 2018/19 academic year. During the 2021/22 and 2024/25 academic years, the lowest completion rates of 50% and 48% respectively were recorded, which had not been seen since the introduction of the module. The following discussion attempts to analyse changes to the module and their impact on the completion rate. However, it should be noted that a lot of these elements are intertwined and not independent of each other. The changes below have happened slowly over more than a decade or so of brainstorming between members of the PASS Team (who often change) and various External Examiners. The Team has been very lucky to have two consistent members of staff on board since 2012 who have worked tirelessly to identify problems and implement changes where they have been possible. Table 1 below notes some of the changes captured in the discussion alongside the number of Leaders and completion rate for that academic year.

**Table 1** Changes to the PASS Leadership module and the completion rate

Year	PASS Leadership module change	Number of Leaders	Completion rate
2010/11	PASS Leadership module introduced	28	43%
2011/12		30	43%
2012/13		26	81%
2013/14	First changes to the Journal rubric	31	84%
2014/15		23	91%
2015/16	Move to digital submission (from handwritten)	23	91%
2016/17		33	67%

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2017/18		24	63%
2018/19	Debriefs introduced	22	91%
2019/20		20	70%
2020/21	PASS Training and PASS sessions online	42	74%
2021/22	PASS Training online and PASS sessions in-person PASS Leader journal template created	36	50%
October 2021: TUS established as a technological university			
2022/23		29	55%
2023/24	Practice sessions introduced (between training and first session) Learning outcomes and assessments reviewed and changed	25	64%
2024/25		21	48%

*Changes to the module*

From 2013 onwards, staff started to enhance the basic rubric with delineation of criteria under different grade bands – the journal was originally assessed as one 100% submission and students received a grade result. Over several years and with the guidance of multiple External Examiners, the assessments and rubric were honed to the current versions (this was outlined in module assessment strategies). Staff refined their approach to cross-moderation to ensure the equal application by academic staff of rubrics to assessments. This approach will allow additional PASS Supervisors to be introduced to assess journals as the number submitted grows. External Examiner comments back this up noting the provision of “consistent judgement of student grades between different assessors.”

In 2023, during the most recent review of the PASS Leadership module, four of the learning outcomes were adapted and reworded. This included an exercise in mapping the PASS Leadership module learning outcomes to the TUS Graduate Attributes. The first two learning outcomes were retained, and the rest were altered to reflect changes to the module:

1. Identify the principles and practices of peer assisted learning and the role of a PASS Leader.
2. Explain and apply the facilitation techniques required of a PASS Leader.
3. Establish and sustain supportive relationships with peer tutees and guide and support them through a range of learning activities during weekly PASS sessions.
4. Engage with academic staff from the Programme Team and school management as required by the PASS Leader role.
5. Evaluate and reflect on the impact of the PASS Leader role and the development of their transversal skills in line with the TUS Graduate Attributes.
6. Demonstrate professionalism as required by the PASS Leader role.

What were originally the third and fourth learning outcomes were combined. Leaders are encouraged to establish a collaborative learning environment, that is, incorporate student-to-student interactions into

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their sessions (European Centre for SI-PASS, 2018). Leaders have always been encouraged to engage with staff. Chickering and Gamson (1987) highlight the importance of encouraging student-faculty contact in undergraduate education. The fifth learning outcome was altered to encourage reflection on the TUS Graduate Attributes in line with what Leaders have learned during their time facilitating PASS sessions. The TUS graduate attributes are broad in scope, intending to enable students to develop lifelong skills and competencies that are transferable outside their discipline and across global settings (TUS, 2022). Ody and Carey (2013) state that PASS is one initiative that can complement the development of transferable skills.

*Addition of technology*

In 2015, the journal submission moved from handwritten to digital one. It took several years to refine this process. Initially databases were used to collate student submissions, however, this was confusing for students and completion rates dropped. In 2021, the PASS Leader journal template was created on Microsoft™ Word to allow students to complete their assessment in one place and submit one document online through a text-matching software. This streamlined the marking process for academic staff, while empowering them to highlight academic integrity with students as they explained the results generated from the software. Nevertheless, completion rates for the module did not increase and instead dropped further, possibly due to changes to the rubric, training and debriefs.

For the 2020/21 academic year, PASS sessions moved online and were facilitated through video conferencing, as the covid pandemic caused a worldwide lockdown. Although this was a difficult time, it resulted in a reliance on specific technologies to enhance engagement and some of these were retained in the return to in-person PASS sessions. As a result of the pandemic, training was altered to include one day online and one day in-person. One of the benefits of this was it enabled students to attend from anywhere in the world, for example, students who were geographically distanced or on holidays. This worked well for two years, as many people were *locked down*. The *return to normal* seemed to negatively impact on students' availability for two days of PASS training and some experienced difficulties with video conferencing and maintaining consistent internet access. This coincided with the development of a short online module that students completed before online training. Thus, the online training day was removed completely and replaced with the online module to be completed by students during the summer months. This flipped classroom approach allows students to complete the online module at their own pace, while completing "collaborative learning activities" during the in-person training day (Hutchings & Quinney, 2015, p. 107). This enables facilitators to focus on preparing Leaders for sessions with first year students by giving them a safe space to practice real-world skills such as presenting, redirecting questions, role-playing, and solving dilemmas.

Embracing technology also resulted in the increased use of instructional technologies, such as Kahoot, Padlet, MS Forms and Vevox. Instructional technologies allow students to submit anonymous responses to questions which facilitators can collate and analyse quickly (Bruff, 2009). PASS Supervisors model the use of these technologies during training and Leaders create their own versions for first year students. PASS Leaders have been observed using these technologies to gather feedback, assess student learning and encourage first year students to suggest ideas for future sessions anonymously. The online training and all the learning materials for the module are provided via Moodle and an accompanying website. TUS students use Moodle to access the learning materials for their programme, so it was logical that they should have a page for the PASS Leadership module. One of the recommendations from Ginty and Harding (2014) was to engage students with the VLE. 2016 saw the introduction of Moodle pages for the first year students, curated by their PASS Leaders. Training includes modelling best practice in utilising Moodle, so that PASS

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Leaders are empowered to optimise their own Moodle pages with first year students. In 2025 every first year group with PASS had a Moodle page which PASS Leaders used, for example, to contact first year students between sessions to remind them to bring notes, notify them of the agreed topic for the next session and highlight upcoming events on campus. PASS Leaders also shared feedback from their sessions, such as photographs of the whiteboard and weblinks.

#### *Structured debriefs and practice sessions*

In 2018, debriefs were introduced for the first time. These were informal and optional for PASS Leaders. Initially, PASS Leaders were encouraged to attend two debriefs to support them in developing activities for sessions and prepare them for their observation. These debriefs have evolved into much more structured and formal sessions and they are now mandatory. In 2023, the number of debriefs was extended beyond two or three, they remained optional and were offered to multiple groups at once. Feedback was sought from PASS Leaders, and it became apparent that the more outspoken PASS Leaders found these sessions extremely beneficial, while the quieter PASS Leaders found it difficult to participate and share their opinions. By 2025, mandatory structured debriefs were provided for each PASS session and held with individual groups where possible. Structured debriefs include a quick check-in, review of their previous session and CAT results, time to make any announcements, and plan their subsequent session. While this was resource-intensive to provide, the benefits were evident as PASS Leaders identified the importance of having a scheduled time dedicated to completing their plans (most PASS Leaders have a packed timetable, and procrastination is always an issue). Anecdotal evidence suggests that being able to provide additional debriefs meant that PASS Leaders reviewed their sessions more effectively and planned subsequent sessions to a higher standard.

In 2023, the introduction of practice sessions allowed PASS Leaders time to practice their skills in a real class environment before facilitating their PASS sessions with first year students. These sessions occurred during the week after training before the first year students commence their classes – an ideal time to reinforce the skills learnt. The training, development and support provided through practice sessions, debriefs and the availability of online resources were valued by the PASS Leaders. These sessions offer essential support to PASS Leaders between sessions and help to build important skills for their future careers.

The most recent External Examiner report for 2024-2025 highlighted the following exemplary practices:

- PASS Leaders are helping new students at TUS to adjust to higher education and get a sense of academic belonging.
- The learning environment is excellent. It provides the students with a real-life working experience where they develop leadership, communication, and group management skills.
- Support for PASS Leaders is also excellent, consisting of an initial training programme followed by various types of support (one-to-one meetings with PASS Supervisor, group meetings with other PASS Leaders, observations of sessions with feedback, as well as reflecting on practice and skill development).

#### *Further support for PASS Leaders*

In 2025, the role of Senior PASS Leader was introduced to assist staff. These experienced Leaders act as role-models during training and coaching sessions with incoming Leaders, "PASS on PASS." This role was extremely effective during training as the incoming Leaders observed Senior Leaders cofacilitating alongside staff, often taking the lead when answering questions. However, the proposed coaching proved difficult to

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arrange due to conflicting timetables and Senior Leaders' heavy workloads. Ody (2022) suggests that graduate interns could be employed to support sustainable and cost-effective growth.

Ginty and Harding (2014) recommended "allocating contact hours to academic staff in each school to support the program and provide quality assurance for the student leadership module". Over a decade later, this still has not been accomplished. The importance of encouraging student-faculty contact has already been highlighted. The first discipline-specific staff members joining PASS Supervisors at debriefs for the 2025/26 academic year. The roles piloted ranged from observation to debriefs. Multiple benefits of this format were noted, namely:

- There was greater scope for creative activities and techniques as PASS Leaders, Supervisor and academic staff brainstormed first year feedback.
- The academic staff member could highlight the topics currently being studied by first year students and where they might be having difficulties, thus giving the PASS Leaders ideas for activities where the first year students did not suggest a topic the previous week.
- PASS Leaders could explain directly to the academic staff member where the first year students were having difficulties and explore possible solutions with them or identify if they needed reassurance.
- The academic staff member could make a note of any concerns that they needed to bring to their colleagues.
- These debriefs gave students time to work on their plans, activities, and Moodle page in a scaffolded environment, surrounded by experts from both PASS and their discipline.

With the addition of academic staff, the best model for debriefs has now been defined as formal, structured, and facilitated (that is, not a chat or check-in). It should occur as soon as possible after the PASS session, be timetabled with a specific PASS Supervisor in a suitable room and include a member of academic staff from the relevant discipline (ideally teaching the first year students) who works collaboratively with PASS Leaders and Supervisors to brainstorm activities. In the future, this debrief model could be led by a staff member who is both SI-PASS Supervisor-trained and an academic from the discipline, that is, one discipline-specific PASS Supervisor would perform both roles. This model, if effectively resourced, could embody a more sustainable approach such as that advocated by Ody & Carey (2013) of [PASS] being "centrally-coordinated, discipline-owned and student-led".

### How the PASS Leadership module assists first year students' transition to higher education

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Adaptations such as those to the rubrics and learning outcomes have obvious benefits to PASS Leaders as they help to formalise their role and encourage reflection on their skills. Other adaptations such as refining training, debriefs, practice sessions and formalising the academic role have clear benefits for the first year students engaging with PASS sessions. These changes make the second-year students better Leaders, which in turn benefits the first year students who attend the PASS sessions they facilitate. Of the 32 PASS Leaders who facilitated sessions during the 2025/26 academic year, 88% have submitted their journal for marking. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is due to the provision of structured debriefs, which is one of the most resource-intensive changes to the module.

PASS is an example of student partnership. Experienced PASS Leaders assist staff during training, organising icebreakers, modelling leadership qualities and answering questions about the role. First year students are encouraged to select the topics for discussion each week. PASS Leaders work collaboratively, including with

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academic staff during debriefs to identify and brainstorm suitable activities and techniques for use during sessions. Carey (2022, p. 211) points out that “students can access other students in different ways to staff, and students can also access staff in different ways to other staff in their roles as student representatives”. Suddenly, PASS and the role of PASS Leader become vital in terms of partnership and accessing the student voice. PASS Leaders provide additional feedback for the university and can become key partners in university initiatives by sharing their experiences nationally and internationally. This includes representing the views of the first year students they have mentored during their first semester at TUS. PASS has led to a greater awareness about the first year experience at a key point, as they transition into the university. It complements a range of TUS initiatives which are designed to support first year students, including a seven-week programme supporting first year induction, and retention initiatives.

### Conclusion

Quality peer learning can enhance the first year experience and ease the transition to higher education. The PASS Leadership module has been critiqued, and its importance has been established. Scaffolding and support for PASS Leaders has been strengthened and this has caused a rise in the completion rate on the module. It is important that these modifications are maintained in subsequent academic years. Partnership is important to PASS; Leaders work with Senior Leaders, academic staff, and PASS Supervisors in support of first year students. Ultimately, it is the first year students who are in receipt of PASS and who have the most to gain from a strengthened module.

It has been shown that the module is fit for purpose but will require additional support. It is vital that PASS retains its dynamic nature and adapts as higher education continues to change. TUS is evolving its approach to embedding PASS in partnership with academic staff, professional support staff and most importantly with students as partners. However, this new approach will require consistent resourcing as PASS grows. For example, how will the quality be assured as PASS is piloted on new campuses, separated geographically from the central coordination? It is vital that staff are trained to support Leaders. How will this professional development be funded? Will Senior PASS Leaders be sufficient to support training and coaching Leaders or is a more established role such as a graduate intern position required to support the core PASS Team?

As mentioned, PASS is one of many such models operating in higher education internationally. It would be valuable to explore how PASS at TUS compares with other SI-PASS initiatives across Europe in terms of how it is structured and delivered. Additionally, there is scope for a comparative study on how the Leadership module at TUS compares to other similar modules in terms of learning outcomes and learning, teaching, and assessment strategies.

### Biography

*Aoife Walsh* is a lecturer in Student Transition and Experience and has trained over 250 PASS Leaders since she first got involved with PASS in 2012. She is motivated by the peer learning community and strives to improve the PASS experience for students. Her education includes MA in Management in Education and PgD in Learning, Teaching and Assessment.

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